



**Take the Time
to Make the
Right Choice
for Your
Family**



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Early Childhood Services – Child Care and Head Start



Choosing Quality Child Care in Maine

Choosing child care is one of the most important decisions you will make for your child.

A good child care setting can have a positive impact on the development of your child.

Remember, it is up to you to choose care for your child. When you have found a program that meets your family's and child's needs, stay involved, ask questions, and talk with your care giver each day about your child.

STEP 1



Places to look, people to ask

- Child Care Resource Development Centers
- Friends and co-workers
- Churches and Synagogues
- Community Organizations
- Schools and Universities
- Head Start Programs
- Yellow Pages
- Physicians
- Public Health Clinics
- Local Bulletin Boards
- Local Child Care Programs
- Boy's & Girl's Clubs
- Newspapers

Child Care Resource Development Centers

The Department of Health and Human Services funds and contracts with a system of child care resource and referral centers, which, in Maine are called Resource Development Centers (RDCs). These agencies make referrals to parents seeking child care and provide information on financial assistance. They make referrals, when possible, to ten child care facilities. There is no fee for this basic service. Early in your search for child care, a visit or call to one of these sites could be most helpful. See the list on pages 10-11.



STEP TWO



Phone ahead and ask questions

Do you have an opening?

What days and hours is care available?

What ages of children are accepted?

What is the group size? Number of care givers?

Can I visit anytime?

What is the cost?

What is included in the cost? (For example, meals, diapers, etc.)

Do I pay when my child does not attend?

How are fees charged? Hourly, weekly?

Can I get child care on holidays and vacation days?

Is there any financial assistance available?

Is the program licensed or certified?

Does the program have a Quality Certificate?

What kind of insurance do you carry?

What is your policy for dealing with sick children?

Are meals and snacks provided?

Are parents asked to do things for the program?

Are there regular parent conferences/meetings?

STEP THREE



Choose at least three places that seem to fit your needs. Make an appointment to visit each one with your child, if possible.

STEP FOUR



Use this checklist when you visit. These are things to notice and questions to ask. You may want to ask some or all of the questions. You may have questions of your own.

Physical Space/Health and Safety

Where your child is cared for needs to be safe and healthy.
Rules should be in place about illness.

	Caregiver:		
	1	2	3
Is there an up-to-date license or certificate posted? (If required)	_____	_____	_____
Is the facility lead safe?	_____	_____	_____
Are there first aid supplies and fire extinguishers?	_____	_____	_____
Are emergency numbers posted near the telephone?	_____	_____	_____
Are there working smoke detectors?	_____	_____	_____
Do children know how to get out if there is a fire?	_____	_____	_____
Has the care giver been trained in CPR or First Aid?	_____	_____	_____
What happens if a child becomes ill or hurt?	_____	_____	_____
How are parents told about illnesses children can catch from each other? _____	_____	_____	_____
Are immunizations up-to-date for each child in care?	_____	_____	_____
Are immunizations up-to-date for care givers?	_____	_____	_____
Are there railings around heaters or wood stoves?	_____	_____	_____

	Caregiver:		
	1	2	3
Are there gates near stairs?	_____	_____	_____
Are household cleaners, matches, medicines, poisons, etc. in safe places?	_____	_____	_____
Do electric outlets have child-proof caps?	_____	_____	_____
Is the facility cheerful, clean and comfortable?	_____	_____	_____
Are the furnishings the correct size for the ages of the children in care?	_____	_____	_____
Is there a place for each child to put his or her things?	_____	_____	_____
Is there a place to sleep at nap-time? Is it clean?	_____	_____	_____
Are the bathrooms and diapering areas clean?	_____	_____	_____
Is there enough space indoors so all the children can move freely and safely?	_____	_____	_____
Is the equipment safe and in good repair?	_____	_____	_____
Is there enough space outdoors to play safely?	_____	_____	_____
Is the outdoor play area fenced and clean?	_____	_____	_____
Can the care giver see the entire playground at all times?	_____	_____	_____
Are swings, slides and other outdoor toys in good condition?	_____	_____	_____
Are swings, slides and other climbing toys well attached and not placed over hard areas?	_____	_____	_____
Is the menu posted? Are the meals nutritious?	_____	_____	_____
Do the children help with the meals?	_____	_____	_____
Does the care giver join the children for meals?	_____	_____	_____
Are hands washed before making and eating food and after going to the toilet?	_____	_____	_____
Is there enough heat, light and fresh air?	_____	_____	_____
Does the care giver keep written information on each child?	_____	_____	_____

Other questions:

Caregiver:
1 2 3

Activities

The day should include activities, such as:

Are there toys for different ages?	_____	_____	_____
Are there toys to help children learn and grow?	_____	_____	_____
Are there activities to help children to think creatively?	_____	_____	_____
Is the children's art work displayed?	_____	_____	_____
Is there time for children to work as a group?	_____	_____	_____
Is there time and space available to play alone?	_____	_____	_____
Is there a list of activities?	_____	_____	_____
Does the list show both active and quiet activities?	_____	_____	_____
Can the children play indoors and outdoors?	_____	_____	_____
Is television used? How much and which programs?	_____	_____	_____

Relationship Between the Care Giver and the Children

A positive and loving relationship between the care giver and the children is very important. In addition, the relationship between the care giver and the parent is also critical. Parents should choose a care giver whose style and attitudes are similar to their own.

Caregiver:
1 2 3

Are the children enjoying themselves?	_____	_____	_____
Do the children play well together?	_____	_____	_____
Does the care giver join the children in activities?	_____	_____	_____

Caregiver:
1 2 3

Does the care giver seem warm, friendly, calm and patient? _____

Does the care giver hold and touch children in a caring manner? _____

Does the care giver listen to the children? _____

Does the care giver help the children express themselves? _____

Can the children make choices and do things for themselves? _____

Does the care giver know what children can do and want to do at different ages? _____

Is enough attention given to each child? _____

Are children helped to solve problems between themselves? _____

Does the care giver have a policy on discipline? _____

Does the care giver use a positive method of guiding children? _____

Are children told about the good things they are doing? _____

Does the care giver have child-rearing beliefs that are similar to your own? _____

Has the care giver had experience and training in working with children? _____

How many different care givers will be with your child during the course of the day? _____

Will a particular care giver have the major responsibility of your child? _____

Caregiver:
1 2 3

Is there a way for parents to receive information from the care giver about the child's day such as eating, sleeping, toileting and activities?

How often does staff change?

Do you feel this care giver is someone you could share information about your child with?

How many children and staff are at the site?

Does the number of staff for children for each age level meet state standards? (See insert)

What did you see that you liked or disliked?

Site 1

Site 2

Site 3

STEP FIVE



Putting it together

- Check references.
- Talk with parents of other children in the program.
- Trust your feelings.
- Make sure you have an agreement with your care giver about services provided, hours, rules, vacation days, cost and payment – for example, if child does not attend.
- When you have found the right program for your child, stay involved, visit often, talk with the care giver and ask your child what the day was like.
- As your child changes and grows, your child care needs may also change.
- Just remember that a license or a certificate as a child care facility only sets minimum standards – **it does not guarantee quality.**
- Call the Child Care Licensing Unit at 287-5060 to obtain a copy of current regulations.
- Call the Child Care Licensing Unit at 287-5060 to inquire if any complaints have been lodged against the care givers you are considering. This is public information.

STEP SIX



Start Out on the Right Step

- Now that you have made your choice of child care, these are things you need to share with your caregiver:
- Child's immunization records showing most recent immunizations.
- Information required for your child's record.
- Emergency phone numbers.
- Any helpful information about your child, such as likes and dislikes.



CHILD CARE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT CENTERS (RDC's)

The following is a listing of the RDC's by county. Parents can call these agencies for child care information and child care options in their community.

County	Agency	Telephone
Aroostook	<i>Aroostook County Action Program</i> P.O. Box 1116 Presque Isle, ME 04769	1-800-432-7881 207-768-3045 Fax: 207-768-3021 TTY: 207-764-3721
Cumberland	<i>So. Maine Area on Aging</i> Child Care Connections 136 US Route One Scarborough, ME 04074	1-888-917-1100 207-396-6566 Fax: 207- 396-6581
Franklin, Oxford & Androscoggin	<i>Community Concepts, Inc.</i> Finders/Seekers 79 Main Street Auburn, ME 04210	1-800-543-7008 207-777-1387 Fax: 207-784-6882 TTY: 207-783-7951
Hancock & Washington	<i>Child & Family Opportunities</i> Child Care Opportunities RDC P.O. Box 648 Ellsworth, ME 04605	1-800-834-4378 207-667-2467 Fax: 207-667-7963



County	Agency	Telephone
Kennebec & Somerset Counties	<i>So. Kennebec Child Development Corp.</i> Child Care Options 99 Western Avenue Augusta, ME 04330	1-888-917-1100 207-626-3410 Fax: 207-626-3617
Penobscot & Piscataquis	<i>CAP/RDC</i> 262 Harlow Street Bangor, ME 04402	1-888-917-1100 207-973-3531 Fax: 207-973-3699 TTY: 207-973-3520
Knox, Waldo, Lincoln & Sagadahoc	<i>Mid-Coast RDC</i> Coastal Economic Dev. 34 Wing Farm Parkway Bath, ME 04530	1-877-684-0466 207- 443-1690 Fax:: 443-7447
York	<i>CareLink/RDC</i> 906 Main Street Sanford, ME 04073	1-888-917-1100 207-324-0735 Fax: 207-490-0595



THE FOLLOWING CHILD CARE OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE IN MAINE

Child Care Centers - Facilities where 13 or more children ages 6 weeks to 13 years may be cared for on a regular or part-time basis. These facilities are required to be licensed by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and must meet minimum requirements concerning health and safety. Centers are subject to biannual inspections by a State Fire Marshal as well as annual review by the DHHS Licensing Unit.

Certified Family Day Care Homes - Facilities in which 3 to 12 children, not related to the care giver, ages 6 weeks to 13 years may receive regular or part-time care. They must meet minimum health and safety requirements, and are inspected bi-annually by a State Fire Marshal and annually by a DHHS Licensing Worker.

Legal Unlicensed Family Day Care – Homes in which only one or two children, not related to the care giver, are cared for without a license.

School-Age Child Care – Care provided for children ages 5-16 during non-school hours. It is available in a variety of settings: schools, community centers, Y's, religious organizations, child care centers, and family day care homes. These programs must comply with DHHS regulations.

In-Home Care - A relative, friend or someone else that you hire to care for your child in your home. This option is not regulated.

OTHER OPTIONS

Nursery Schools - Facilities for 3 or more children between the ages of 3 and 7 that provide half-day care, not including kindergarten programs. Parents often combine these programs with other types of child care to create a full-day child care “package.” Nursery schools must be licensed by DHHS and meet minimum standards.

Head Start - This program offers educational programs to low-income preschool children including children with special needs. Other important services such as medical, dental, educational, mental health and social services are also offered.

Most programs also have child care services to create a full day program.

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A Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator, has been designated to coordinate our efforts to comply with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services regulations (45 C.E.R. Parts 80, 84, and 91, the Department of Justice regulations (28 C.E.R. Part 35), and the US Department of Education regulations (34 C.E.R. Part 106) implementing these Federal laws. Inquiries concerning the application of these regulations and our grievance procedures for resolutions of complaints alleging discrimination may be referred to our Civil Right Compliance Coordinator at 221 State Street, Augusta, Maine 04333, Telephone number: (207) 287-3488 (Voice) or (207) 287-4479 (TTY) or the Assistant Secretary of the Office of Civil Rights of the applicable Department (e.g. the Department of Education), Washington. D.C.

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Early Childhood Services – Child Care
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Office of Child Care & Head Start

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